

Community Services and Recreation

DRAFT MINUTES/APPROVED

To: Community Services Commission Members

From: Gerardo Sorkin, Director

Re: Commission Meeting January 6, 2009

Meeting was called to order by Chairman Laurie Jean Hannon at 5:31 p.m.
New Commissioners Maggie Jensen, Donna Malley and Judith Meyers were welcomed by First Selectman Janet McCarty and Chairman Laurie Jean Hannon.

I. Attendance:

Present: Thomas Balga, Michael Compare, Walter Heinig, Maggie Jensen, Judith McKay, Laurie-Jean Hannon, Donna Malley

Staff: Gerardo Sorkin, Director and Carla Pelliccio (Secretary).

Absent: William Carey, Judith Meyers

II. Acceptance of Minutes:

Tom Balga made a motion to accept the Minutes of October 14, 2008, seconded by Mike Compare.

Mike Compare made a motion to accept the Minutes of November 4, 2008, seconded by William Carey.

Judith McKay made a motion to accept the Minutes of December 2, 2008, seconded by Thomas Balga.

III. Correspondence:

No correspondence to report.

IV. Director's Report:

Gerardo Sorkin welcomed the new Commissioners. Reiterated the value and importance of their participation and looks forward to working together in this new partnership.

Daycare:

Holiday Activity: Visit was made by the Daycare children to the Senior Center on 12/16. Children had lunch with the Seniors, sang Christmas Carols for the Seniors and Santa visited and distributed toys. Students from the North Haven H.S. Rotary Club also participated in this intergenerational event.

Early Literacy Project put on by pre-school: ACES received a grant in which the Daycare participated in putting on a play called Gingerbread Babies. The play was followed by an activity in which the children made gingerbread houses with their parents. The idea was to incorporate pieces of the curriculum into a topic that brought parents and children together.

Professional Development: Daycare Director Lauren Montano currently attending workshop, "Finance in Programs for Young Children" Workshop on 1/8 and 1/9 in Cromwell; this is a requirement for the CT Director's credential.

Maintenance: Ceiling and walls of the Daycare were painted in December.

Senior Center:

Activities: Copies of the December *Senior Happenings* brochure of activities and events were distributed to each Commission member.

Mr. Sorkin attended the second of the newly scheduled monthly open forum discussions with the Seniors today. This open discussion takes place among the seniors, on the first Tuesday, between 12:45pm - 1:15pm, monthly. This forum will allow the seniors to offer comments, suggestions and ask any questions they may have. One of the topics this month surrounded how the activities will take place during the renovations of the Senior Center.

Senior Center Renovation and expansion Plans: During the transition period, the American Legion will be used for the main operations and many of the activities. Food service will not be interrupted. The Library will house programs that may require use of computers; some activities will be transferred to take place at Recreation. This transition period is expected to take 6-7 months (from March – September 2009).

Annual Holiday Party took place at Zandri's Stillwood Inn on 12/5/08. Largest attendance on record with 176 seniors. Senior New Years Celebration took place at the Senior Center. 48 people out of 70 attended, despite the inclement weather.

The Senior Center has begun collecting socks for the community; will be given to Community Services as well as local churches.

Counseling:

Personnel: The new Counselor IV, Jennifer Gosselin, LPC began on Monday 12/8. A new Counselor III has been hired to replace current Counselor III, Sandra Gonsalves, who will be leaving on 1/23/09. This candidate's name cannot be disclosed at this time as they are currently going through the necessary background checks, however this person is an licensed clinical social worker with experience with adults who have both mental and substance abuse issues. The new Counselor III will start on January 20, 2009.

At this time, all positions have now successfully been filled. Currently managing waiting list to make sure that current cases receive the appropriate attention.

Youth Services:

Workforce Alliance student employment: With the success of the Summer Employment Program, students have been placed during the semester and are currently working; program will continue throughout the year.

Vision Goggles Workshop took place at the middle and high schools on Thursday and Friday 12/4/08 and 12/5/08 as part of one of the activities under the Substance Abuse Prevention Council.

Annual "Sticker Shock" Program took place on 12/1/08 at Save Rite Liquors, in which North Haven H.S. students affixed prevention stickers (shape of stop sign, reads "You must be 21 to purchase") on alcohol containers.

Planning for the 23rd annual Project Graduation festivities for the Class of 2009. The event will take place at Quassy Amusement Park, in Middlebury, CT.

The next Substance Abuse Prevention Council (SAPC) will be meeting on 1/7/09 at North Haven High School at 2:15pm. A variety of attendees included the superintendent, the police and fire chief, Gerardo

Sorkin, Nancy Leddy, as well as several student and parent representatives, as well as teachers. Encouraged the public to participate. This meeting had been moved up from the originally scheduled date of 1/17/09 in light of the press release that the Police Department released today, 1/6/09 surrounding the burglary ring connected to the abuse of prescription drugs by some young people who had been arrested.

Mr. Sorkin reiterated that the goal of the SAPC is to discuss ways in which substance abuse can be prevented.

Judith McKay asked Mr. Sorkin if Community Services were involved with the incident that took place at the middle school a few weeks prior regarding the choking game (invoking a sensation of being high) that the 8th students had been participating in. Mr. Sorkin stated that no referrals had been requested of the office and presumed that the issue had been handled internally. Ms. Hannon suggested that this may be a good topic to incorporate into Youth Services educational initiatives.

Community Services:

Monthly Food Bank Statistics for December 2008: 261 meals were distributed for the month of December. These numbers did not reflect the food that was distributed for holiday meals.

Holiday Meal / Toy Distribution: took place on 12/18/08 and 12/19/08 in the Community Services office. 56 holiday meals (turkey and food) during this past holiday season. This was an increase from 50 meals in 2007. In addition, toys for 57 children were provided this holiday. Finally, 6 families were successfully matched to be “adopted” by other families this holiday season. A press release had been sent to local media expressing note of thanks to each business, school and organization who donated toys and food this holiday season. Mr. Sorkin read the press release to the Commission.

Energy Assistance Program: Applications are moving along well this energy season. Have processed approximately 200 applications through mid-December, which is a slight increase from last year. In addition the Community Services Emergency Fuel Fund has been utilized for emergency situations that have arisen among residents this heating season. St. John's Episcopal Church has given a generous donation of \$5,000. In addition, various residents have made smaller donations in the amount of \$100 and \$200 throughout the season.

Mr. Heinig asked what the success rate for approvals for Energy Assistance. Mr. Sorkin will provide that report at the next Commission meeting. In the meantime, Mr. Sorkin stated that the Community Action Agency has begun sending weekly reports to indicate the listings of applicants who have been approved and denied. For those residents who have been denied, the Department has taken a proactive approach by contacting those residents to either encourage them to reapply, direct them to contact Operation Fuel or inform them about any additional resources including the Community Services’ emergency fuel fund. A press release had been sent to the local media in December to remind residents to apply and the additional resources available. At the time that the residents call the Community Services office to arrange an appointment for Energy Assistance, they are informed of what necessary documentation they must bring with them. Mr. Sorkin also stated that by taking a more proactive approach with our residents in performing this outreach, it will reduce the possibilities of emergency related fuel assistance.

V. Finance Report:

The November 2008 budget reports were reviewed by the Commission (report ending November 30, 2008).

Community Services November 2008: bottom line = 36.3% which is under budget.

Due to Counselor IV vacancy, the Full-Time line has not been utilized. Regarding the Dues and Expenses Line: this line is about to be exhausted (96.9% utilized year to date). This line has been utilized for license renewals and professional trainings. He anticipates that this line will be utilized more in the future and plans on budgeting more accurately in the next budget year to accommodate these professional development needs. The Consultants Line (0% utilized year to date) is anticipated to be utilized soon with an Electronic Medical records system before the end of the fiscal year.

Welfare: Current snapshot of Welfare expenditures (eviction related expenses) were also distributed and reviewed.

November 2008: bottom line relatively on target= 39.4%

Senior Center: Current snapshot of Senior Center expenditures were also distributed and reviewed.

November 2008: bottom line relatively on target= 35.1%

Daycare: The current snapshot of the Daycare was provided. Mr. Heinig asked for clarification on what the term "CD/Checks" indicated on the report. Mr. Sorkin will look into this meeting and provide clarification for the next meeting. In addition he expects to bring the annual report for the next meeting.

Mr. Heinig requested that in addition to the expenditures, he would like to see a report listing any donations that are received and what funds they are being deposited into. Mr. Sorkin stated that there are two funds that the donations get deposited into: the Emergency Fund and the Outreach Fund, each with their own subcategories. Any donation that is received is immediately logged and sent to Finance who receives the deposit. Finance sends a monthly report of these donations and Mr. Sorkin will present that report moving forward starting at the next Commission meeting.

Ms. Hannon asked for clarification on the receipt of donations. Mr. Sorkin stated that no cash donations are accepted, only check or money orders are accepted. Once the donation is received, a receipt is generated and all are batched and sent to the Finance office every Friday. Ms. Hannon asked for Mr. Sorkin to explain the process of how the donated funds are utilized. Mr. Sorkin explained the process which includes writing a memo to Finance requesting the use of funds and for what purpose. Finance then generates a check and then proceed accordingly. For example, if a resident needs clothing, once Finance provides the check, a staff member from Community Services will go to the store and purchase a gift card to provide the resident. The resident is then required to provide the receipt of purchase to ensure that the gift card was spent appropriately.

Mr. Sorkin stated that guidelines have been established in order to determine the eligibility of need of the resident. He will be happy to present on these guidelines at the next meeting.

VI. Old Business:

Mr. Sorkin provided copies of the architectural plans for the Committee to view. The request had been made by Mr. Heinig during the last meeting.

Mr. Sorkin provided a copy of the organizational chart for Community Services and Recreation. Ms. Hannon clarified to the new commissioners that, while the organizational chart reflected all staff in both the Community Services and Recreation, the responsibility of the commission is to oversee the operations for Community Services only.

VII. New Business:

Ms. Hannon stated that with the term end of certain Commissioners, the Commission has lost a Vice Chair. She suggested to her fellow Commission members that a Vice Chair should be appointed. Judith McKay nominated Mr. Heinig as Vice Chair and Ms. Hannon made the motion to accept.

Mr. Balga asked, in light of the previous meetings in which many of the members could not attend, asked his fellow Commissioners if they would prefer meeting every other month instead of each month. Ms. Hannon stated that the Commission previously voted on having monthly meetings (instead of every other month), and looked to Mr. Sorkin for his opinion. Mr. Sorkin felt very strongly about meeting monthly, as there are a variety of initiatives and programs to report monthly, allowing a more continuous contact with the commissioners as he values the opportunity to work with the Commissioners. Mr. Sorkin's recommendation is to keep the meetings as a once a month commitment in order to maintain the ongoing communication and receive feedback. The suggestion was to eliminate summer meetings as well as in December (based upon the holiday obligations). There was agreement in this sentiment among Commissioners and therefore the Commission will move forward with monthly meetings.

Ms. Hannon asked Carla Pelliccio to get clarification with the Town regarding the amount of notice that must be given prior to a Commission meeting if the decision is made to cancel.

Ms. Hannon recounted the fact that during previous Commission meetings, supervisors from each of the departments would present on current happenings. In light of new staff coming on board, Ms. Hannon recommended that the supervisors be brought in again to present, or even different staff to present on current happenings within each department, or any major project they were working on.

Lastly, Ms. Hannon recounted a recognition breakfast that had been held in the past to honor the staff members (annually in March). Suggested to look at possibly hosting this breakfast again.

VIII. Public Participation:

No public was in participation.

IX. Adjournment:

Laurie Jean Hannon asked for a Motion to Adjourn accepted by Judith McKay, seconded by Walter Heinig. The meeting was adjourned at 6:41 p.m.